

estimates, which most deeply affects the respectability of the body, and for this I see no other remedy than the publication of the estimated cost and the actual cost of every erection throughout the country. An annual and authentic return of this kind would be much more valuable than many blue-books, and would exercise a useful check upon the wilful imaginations of artistical architects, who excel in the preparation of pretty pictures for competitions, but are above all such grovelling considerations as are involved in the cabalistical characters of £. s. d.

B.

As a vast deal has been said relative to architects being compelled to take a diploma before they should be permitted to practise, and, as some suppose, a great benefit would arise to the profession in consequence of such a movement, and as all have argued nearly in the same strain, allow me to ask the supporters of this question if they have taken into consideration that, although lawyers and doctors must take a diploma before they can practise, there are members who do practise and who are any thing but clever or efficient men, a fact well known to every one who has taken the trouble to consider the subject, and therefore the diploma has not produced that benefit to the community which its supporters and promoters supposed that it would; nor do I believe that it has yielded that good to the professions which it was at first believed it would do; but to the point. Would a diploma prevent false estimates? would it prevent architects taking practice at a lower rate than 5 per cent.? or teach them to pause before they responded to every call in the shape of an advertisement made by church or chapel building committees or boards of guardians? I say, no!

Who have been the authors of all the enormities complained of? who have brought a host of indignities upon the architectural profession? have they been brought on by men not properly schooled in it, or quack draftsmen? No! none of these; the culprits are its own sons, those who have been trained in the usual way, men who are qualified and who could not be prevented from taking a diploma if they should ever be called upon to do so,—aye, men from whom better things might have been expected.

Is the Small Pox Hospital, which was guaranteed to be executed for 12,000*l.* and which will exceed 20,000*l.* when completed, or the new Lunatic Asylum at Colney Hatch, estimated at 80,000*l.*, the lowest real estimate for which was 185,000*l.*, or the Edmonton Union Workhouse, erected a few years back at a cost of 16,000*l.* when the guardians were led to suppose that 9,000*l.* were sufficient for the same? Are these unusual occurrences; causing the public, as they do, to think lightly of architects? No! sad to say, there are many, many such instances—too numerous to particularise, yet too important to pass by unnoticed; and is it not notorious that two gentlemen who were formerly in partnership brought themselves into public notice by undertaking practice at 2½ or 3 per cent., and securing jobs by false estimates? Has the Birmingham Union affair fallen into oblivion? Have not the architects undertaken to carry out their designs for less than the usual remuneration? and will a diploma prevent these actions? I say, no! for the profession will still number amongst its members those very men who have brought these justly censurable evils into existence. Look over the whole catalogue of competitions, and you will find that 95 of every 100 have been obtained, not by quack draftsmen or inefficient men, but by men of standing who have had friends at court, and who have secured the selection of their designs by the influences of dear Mr. Splitag, the grocer, Mr. Gingham, the umbrella-maker, Mr. Candelwick, the tallow chandler, and others, who composed the committee, and who were all friendly to Mr. Lines, the architect, and in consequence of their friendly votes and kind co-operation have been favoured by other friends of the architects with an order either for a new umbrella or an extra quantity of candles or tea. Would a diploma stop this? No! Further, does not the law with respect to competitions lay in your own hands? Certainly it does. Don't compete unless upon fair terms; refuse to carry out your designs

for less than the usual commission; resist all unfair offers or actions; and the consequence will be that committees will find out that they must come forward and meet you with proper terms and in a proper spirit, or they will perceive that they cannot obtain the assistance they seek.

VSMITAS.

### THE EVILS OF SHORT LEASES.

THE universal centralisation of property in Great Britain is the bane of society, the curse of the State, and the sure prelude to antagonism in classes, if not of assured decadence. Various articles published in THE BUILDER on the subject of short leases, last year, treated this subject in *extenso*; it was shown that the tendency of fixed capital in houses rapidly concentrated in the comparatively few ground landlords; that all the houses (the only fixed capital) in all the cities and towns of England were falling, as a tontine, into the proprietary and possession of such as the Marquis of Westminster, the Duke of Bedford and Portland, Lords Northampton, Southampton, Fitzhardinge, Portman, and some others in the metropolis; that the terms of leases are becoming shorter as mankind multiplies;—that the longest lease is now ninety years, and most usually but sixty years!—that on the greatest urban estates, one half the whole capital expended by generations passed away has already fallen into the lap of plethoric wealth, whilst the moderate classes are wholly excluded! That in one more generation one-half of the remainder must fall into the same Maelstrom of cupidity, and that in two more generations it must swallow all!

A remedy for such spoliation of the masses was at the same time suggested, which, by a perfectly equitable procedure, might be carried out. It was this:—To make it eligible for any tenant of a building on long lease (above twenty years), to serve notice on his landlord that he designed to purchase the interest in perpetuity, always reserving to such lord his head rent. For this purpose (as in cases where lands are required for railways), a notice should be served that perpetuity of tenure was required; a valuation jury should be summoned, and their award should be binding on both parties: that is, that the amount assessed as the representative value should be tendered and paid to the lessor, and that such payment and award should create a tenure in perpetuity.

If only one-fourth of the tenements on the first-mentioned nobleman's metropolitan estates were so enfranchised, then, on that section alone, one thousand householders must become proprietors, have a fixed interest in the polity of the State, a sympathy with the poor, and a stake in the empire! Whereas, on the lapse of private interest, and their mergence into the swollen rentals of the aristocracy, those middle classes, perhaps without a possession in the soil, must be thrown amongst the floating elements of a dislocated society, and, in so far as they are treacherously dealt with, add to the too prevalent discontent at the exceeding wealth of the rich and the exceeding misery of the poor.

Many are the examples of men unwise in their generation, who have builded up houses, and exhausted fortunes, on a favoured residence, or good standing for trade: in two generations all pass away, and are absorbed by the insatiate Mammon of riches; the widow impoverished, the children beggared, may deplore the reckless waste of improvident forefathers. Their lease is expired; they must vacate, unless prepared to pay a rack rent, increased from three to tenfold!

There is no alternative for the remedy of an evil which is growing in magnitude, under a cunningly devised and solid compact of the great against the small, other than that which is here propounded. Let it go on, and the bonds of society are rent asunder. Those who have are handed against those who have not; aggrandisement is exaggerated, until magnates become superhuman, and until the multitudes are debased, whilst the laws of boundless Providence, that poised the world and its conditions in a balance, are set at naught. Thus it is that the very prosperity of a State tends to its downfall, for what can thrive with the proud "who devour widows' houses?"

The theories here alluded to, so published in THE BUILDER, were shown to several popular

members of Parliament, such as Mr. Horsman, Lord Dudley Stuart, and others, who approved them. All architects and builders who clearly discerned the beneficial influence that perpetuated tenures must have on arts and architecture, approved them. All benevolent men actuated solely by public interests and the common weal approved them. Not so the great proprietors. They calculate on "adding house to house, until there be no place left." They cannot, in case of an enfranchisement, preserve to their own multiplied posterity, multiplied estates, with Parliamentary and fixed interests to each and every of their heritors; therefore they dread the alternation of fixed capital into the possession of middle orders, and the acquirement to themselves of only the representative value in funded stocks; for such a change would invest these orders with legislative or representative power.

As a specimen of the temper in which such suggestions are regarded by landlords, take the reply of a member for a home county, who returned the printed copies on perpetuity of leaseholds, with this note:—"I see nothing in your plan but one for leaseholders to rob landlords; they have obtained possession of a piece of land on certain conditions, and for certain purposes,—that is, a lease for 99 years, on which they have built houses calculated to last that time, and then to tumble down; and you propose to make this a pretext for robbing the owners of their land in perpetuity, under the mild term of a transfer,—just as a pick-pocket transfers your handkerchief from your pocket to his."

'Tis as unnecessary to observe the disingenuousness of the arguments, as to comment on the style, of such a reply to a proposition for fair purchase,—one at least as fair as that by which the Legislature authorized the appropriation of freeholds for railroads on valuation, of common and waste lands, on requiring the lords of manors, or of the extinction of debts owing to tradesmen of six years' due. However, the Legislature being owners of parks, wisely made a reservation in their own favour, that, although railroads might take their course through farms, paddocks, closes, and gardens, still parks should be sacred, and only attainable on the valuation of their proprietors themselves.

The plain and practical mode of meeting a great social evil as here detailed is simple and honest, and is appreciated, as a known fact, in a "known tongue." It is certain that attention, first aroused by THE BUILDER, is awake to the imperious necessity of a change; and equally sure that some of the able and liberal members of the House will give a momentum to the theory which, although started recently against a long-enduring evil, may prove perhaps as efficacious and as electric in its effects, producing benefits and intelligence hitherto unsuspected, as the almost magic transmission of intelligence by wire. Many latent properties of nature are still hidden from the apprehensions of man; accident or the occasion may reveal them, and when they are called into action, the human family is elevated. England is the only country in the earth where men will build on transitory and evanescent terms. A glance at the magnitude and solidity of mansions in other lands, demonstrates this. Look at Paris: there the sites of houses are in freehold, and there architecture is fostered—at least in private abodes—for the great structures there are for the most part in perpetuity. The ill-contrived, paltry, and mean character of a street or lane in London will almost demarcate the duration of the lease of the foundation; it is calculated to last the term, as the shell of the engineer when projected from a mortar, has its elevation more aloft to clear space in a parabola, so the frail structure is erected to endure for a time equable with the interest of the builder.

QUONDAM.

NEWPORT CHURCH COMPETITION.—We understand that six designs have been selected from the thirty that were exhibited, from which the select committee are to submit the one they determine on as the most desirable to the body of subscribers. The designs of Mr. Dawes and Mr. Johnson had an equal number of votes; Mr. Stratton, jun., came next, and Messrs. Fuller and Gingell, and Mr. Frances, were the other selected competitors.